

"Some one has originated this. What does that dress represent? An ice palace, madame?" "No! It is superb!" "Mais oui, madame, excellent," and then, carried away by the thought, he forth and forth, dress, covered with a shimmering frost. "You see, madame, the pinnacle of the tower, and the girl follows the frosted outline of a face-smile of the ice palace. Neva. An emerald staircase hanging from the edge of lace, completes the picture. I must have it," cried; "I must have, madame." "I will pay double." "Impossible!" "Trebble!" "I would willingly give five times the price for your fancy, but I cannot; it catches sent to me." "Tush!" I impatiently ate." "It is impossible, madame. I am but masquerade that you see." "And for whom?" I whispered myself with vexation. I desired a card by chance, and I was dressed in disguise, eh?" "I make for no such thing, madame, with a reflection of dress is for the Countess Zerkoff something else—"

"I turned my eyes from the dress and racked my brains for some splendid, but the idea came in my glorious glare I faced the incident to please me for years, and I succeeded."

"To be original nowadays is to be so commonplace," after all.

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ences against the alliance.

"You will easily recognize me—I shall represent the

group surrounding the Countess.

A black and white illustration of a man and a woman in 18th-century attire. The man, on the left, wears a dark coat, a white cravat, and breeches, holding a long cane. The woman, on the right, wears a dark dress with a white apron and a large floral corsage. They are standing in a room with three doorways in the background. Two other figures are visible in the background. The artist's signature 'MAKER' is in the bottom right corner.

"Left youth behind," he murmured, despondingly.
 "You said so, mon ami."
 "It was in an undiplomatic moment."
 "Therefore true, and your tongue, at least, is still

Gradually an idle group grew round us—flattering gallants who protested with glowing compliments "that it was too cruel of their hostess to hide all the lovely faces of Paris behind silken masks."

While the gallants who had clustered around the Countess were collecting my truant pearls, she walked across and glared into my face with eyes that blazed with fury.

"I Mean This, Gaspard, Mon Cher Ami. I Want You to Do Me a Favor!"

He was the original. I will go as 'Carmen.'"

The daintiness of my epigram pleased me so well that I was almost content, yet, as I drove toward Le Bois de Boulogne, the desire for the costume came upon me again. And I was not a Bohemian, nor was I an ordinary ball masquerer. Here everything was to be pretense, from the characters represented to the fable that the dancers knew it one another. It was not to be real, and no dissimulation was to be unmasking time, but every one was to be incognito, from the beginning to the end.

"How long?" There was no unmasking time, but every one was to be incognito, from the beginning to the end. It was rumored that even our host and hostess would live up to their own heads and tails, and would not throw up to know any one, and yet every one was to see every one; no master of the ceremonies, no host and hostess, no introductions or formal presentations, but that that one who there was an official stamp upon it was his passport of reputation. It was a Bohemian idea of party, of her who had brought it to Paris—the Countess, wife of the Russian ambassador, and since, prince, instead of nature; yet it was not to be, and I grew peevish as I nursed my discomfiture.

As the crowd collected, I entered the gates, and

He lowered his voice and continued impressively, "Influences so powerful that it might be possible for them to obtain our secret papers, open them, read them and then rescal them and pass them on to their destination." "But how?" I would be useless without the key to the cipher, mon ami."

"That is stolen in Paris."

"Ah! from whom?"

"The Count himself, and dispatched at once to those awaiting it."

"Childlike in its simplicity," I murmured, with a wailing cry.

"The Countess is a wonderful woman," he admitted, and then continued: "You see how easy it is. These people, these gossips, go to the ball, the dancing between France and Russia, but not to the key of the cipher—that is stolen here."

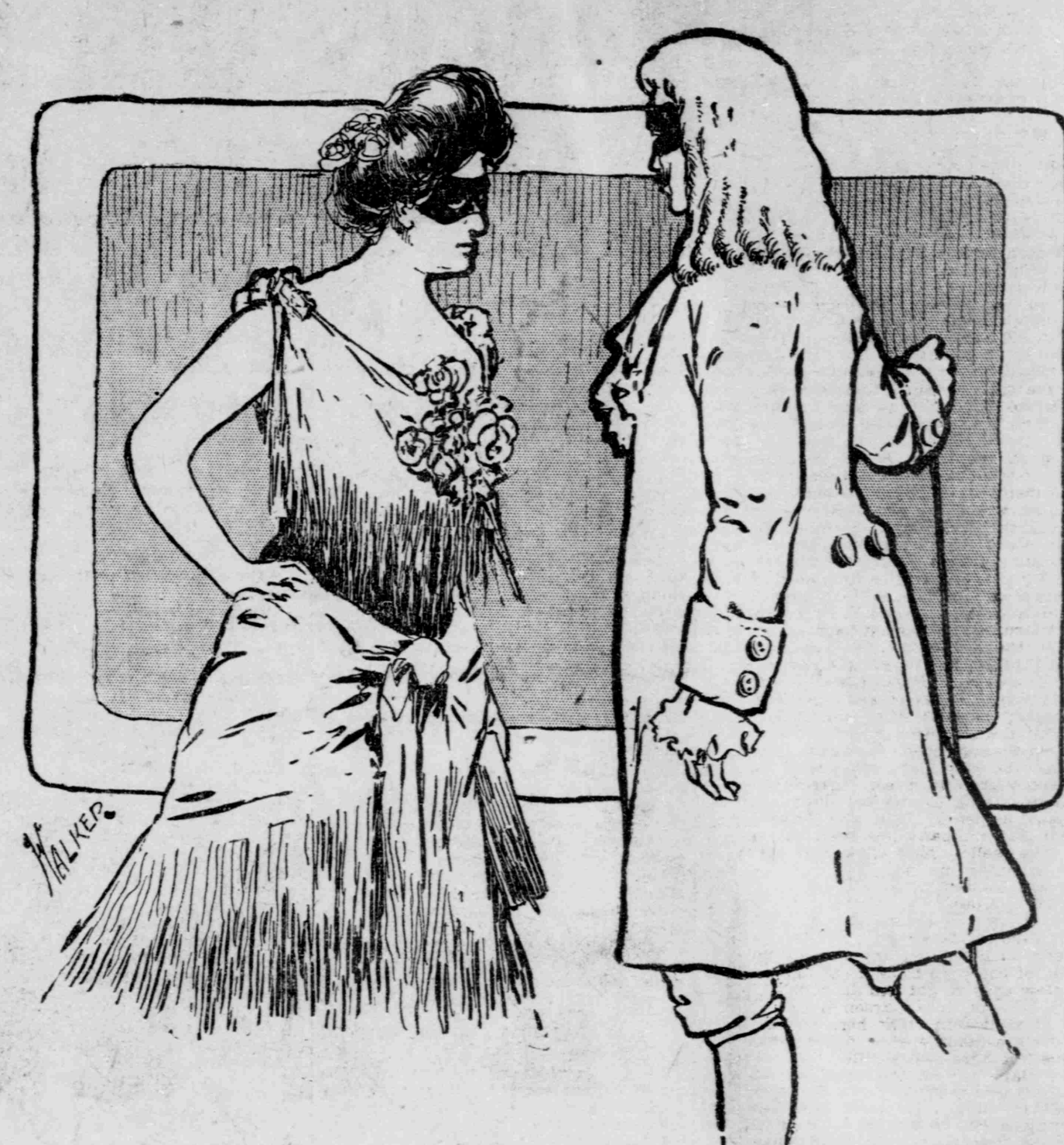
"But, of course, the thief is known already," I cried disdainfully.

"Almost," he replied, with the first flash of enthusiasm he had manifested—"almost. On Wednesday we shall catch him in the very act of opening one thing we are certain. He moves in diplomatic circles, and knows that

Strictly obedient to my instructions, she danced but

of enjoyment. Take two, or three, or four, or what you will; their fragrance may be even greater in the morning."

It was the third time he had said it, and there was a crescendo of meaning in the phrase he whispered: "You are a clever little devil!"



" 'You Are a Clever Little Devil' "